

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

lers. Dr. M. is much interested in the subject; is quite convinced of the correctness of your views, and has promised to keep an eye upon those excavations, and any others that may be made, and to communicate to me anything interesting that he may discover.

G. B. W.

REV. DR. ROBINSON."

ARTICLE V.

ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENT IN THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

By Prof. H. B. Hackett, Newton Theol. Institution.

THE epistle to the Galatians is one of the most argumentative of all the New Testament epistles; both in this respect and in point of doctrinal importance, it stands confessedly next to the epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews. The following is an attempt to exhibit with conciseness a logical outline of the contents of this epistle. It will be perceived that in two or three instances the course of thought as developed here, is founded on passages which are controverted, and which some might choose to understand differently;¹ but for the most part, the nerve of the argument will be found to be contained in expressions which by general consent admit of only one explanation.

The general object of the epistle was to arrest the progress of the false sentiments respecting the mode of acceptance with God, which the Judaizing errorists were spreading in the Galatian churches, and to bring back the Galatians to their original dependence on Christ as the only foundation of their hope of salvation. For the accomplishment of this object, the writer adapting himself to the course pursued by his opponents aims, first, to establish his claim to a full equality as an apostle with the other acknowledged apostles of our Lord; second, to explain and confirm the true doctrine of justification by grace alone in opposition to that of works; and, finally, to administer such counsels and reproofs as the moral condition of the Galatians required. Of these three parts into which the epistle divides itself, the first may be termed *apologetic*, including the first two chapters, the second *doctrinal* or *dogmatic*, including the third and fourth chapters, and the

¹ This remark applies, however, almost exclusively to 3: 19. 5: 11.

third *practical*, embracing the two remaining chapters. These three divisions follow each other in strict logical order. The first is necessary to the second, since without an admission of the writer's apostolic authority, his subsequent exposition of the way of salvation would have possessed the weight only of an ordinary human opinion, instead of being as it now is, authoritative and final; and since, on the other hand, the great peculiarity of the plan of salvation on which he insists is its opposition to the system of law or works, the third part becomes obviously a necessary complement to the second. Those who profess to rely on this method of justification, are to avoid the error of supposing that because they are separated from the law as a source of merit, they are released from it also as a rule for the government of their lives.

A more particular analysis of the course of thought is as follows. In the introduction, Paul asserts in the strongest manner, the divine origin of his apostleahip, and his appointment to it without any human intervention, and invokes on the Galatians the usual benediction from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In this connection he brings incidentally into view the sacrifice and death of Christ as the means of human salvation, and thus announces the great theme of the epistle at the outset, 1: 1—5.

He then proceeds to express his astonishment at the sudden defection of the Galatians from the truth, characterizes the error which they had embraced, or were in danger of embracing, as an utter and fatal perversion of the gospel, and in the most emphatic terms pronounces the conduct of those, who had persuaded them to this course, to be deserving of the severest reprobation and punishment. The plan of salvation as preached by himself, was so certainly and unalterably the only possible way of salvation, that any different system though taught by an angel from heaven, must be rejected, at once, as false merely on the ground of such difference, 1: 6—10.

In vindication of the right, thus asserted, to declare as an infallible teacher what the truth is, Paul enters next upon an argument to show, first, that he had received his doctrine as to the mode of salvation, not from any human teaching but by direct revelation; and, second, that this doctrine thus communicated to him, was demonstrated to be true by a consideration of its own nature, its effects, its harmony with Scripture, its attestation by miracles and other similar evidences.

First; his knowledge of the gospel is proved to have been not of human but divine origin, negatively by the fact that immediately on his conversion, he entered on the full exercise of his office as an apostle without any consultation with human advisers, 1: 11—17; that he

preached the gospel for years without any intercourse or even personal acquaintance with the apostles, and that when at length he went to Jerusalem and saw some of their number, it was a visit of friendship merely, and had no relation whatever to his attainment of a fuller knowledge of the Christian doctrines, 1: 18—24. Again, the same thing is proved affirmatively, by the fact that on his coming at a later period into fuller connection with the apostles, his views of truth were sanctioned by them as perfectly coincident with theirs, who had been taught personally by our Lord, 2: 1—6; that he was recognized by them, as standing in all respects, officially, on a level with themselves, 2: 7—10; and that so far from having ever acted in subordination to them, or having acknowledged any dependence on them, he had on a memorable occasion, at Antioch, opposed the very chief of them, viz. Peter, reproving him, publicly and to his face, for having practically abandoned the great principle of justification by faith alone, inasmuch as he had timidly concealed for a time his real convictions, and acted as if Jewish rites must be superadded to faith in Christ as essential to salvation, 2: 11—21. In confirmation of these statements, Paul presents a brief outline of his well known history, adapted to show that he could have become such as he was and that he was in fact such as he claimed to be, in consequence only of having been appointed to his work by God himself, and qualified for it by endowments received immediately from him.

Having thus, in the first two chapters, vindicated his authority as an apostle, or in other words, shown that the gospel which he preached must be true, because he was taught it by direct revelation, Paul proceeds, in the next place, to argue the truth of the gospel from a consideration of the system, both as viewed in itself and as attested by the appropriate external marks of its divine character. A summary of the argument as developed in this connection, is the following. The gratuitous system of justification as contained in the gospel, must be the true one in opposition to that of merit or works, first, because the Holy Spirit accompanies its reception as a witness that those who embrace it, are adopted as the children of God, 3: 2—4; second, because it has been sanctioned by miracles, 3: 5; third, because it accords with the manner in which Abraham was justified, 3: 6, 7; fourth, because it fulfils the predictions of the Old Testament, in which it was foretold that Christ was to be the medium through which spiritual blessings should be conferred on mankind, 3: 8, 9; and fifth, because it is the only system adapted to men as sinners. In confirmation of the last point it is shown, that, on the ground of obedience justification is impossible, because the obedience which the law demands,

must be perfect; and as no individual renders this, it is evident that as many as are of the law, are under a curse. Under these circumstances, therefore, Christ gave himself as a ransom to redeem us from the curse of the law, being made himself a curse for us and thus providing a way of salvation which is applicable to all, Gentiles as well as Jews, on condition of faith, 3: 10—17.

The objection which might be urged against a part of the above reasoning, that the legal economy as established by Moses having been given subsequently to the time of Abraham, had placed men on a different footing in regard to the attainment of spiritual blessings, is answered by saying that the supposition is forbidden by the character of God. Even human contracts, when once ratified, remain binding on the parties, and nothing at variance with the original stipulations may afterwards be added to them. In justifying Abraham by faith, God entered into a virtual engagement to bestow the heavenly inheritance, always and only, on the same condition; and the giving of the law, therefore, which was a subsequent transaction, could not have annulled the promise in this respect, 3: 15—18.

But if the law have no value as a means of enabling us to establish a claim to the divine favor, of what advantage is it, the objector demands, 3: 19. In reply to this question, the apostle explains the great object of law to be, to prepare men for the reception of the gospel by awakening them to a consciousness of their sins and convincing them of their need of the deliverance from guilt and condemnation, which the redemption of Christ affords, 3: 20—22. We may suppose that while Paul would describe this as the office of law in general and one, therefore, which it is adapted still to perform as a means of bringing men to Christ, he means to affirm it here more especially of the Mosaic economy, that great embodiment of the legal principle, which was established to prepare the way for another and better system; and then as to its outward forms, its rites and symbols, was destined to come to an end, 3: 23—25. Under this more perfect system which is realized in Christ, those who were only the natural descendants of Abraham, become by faith his spiritual seed; those who were servants groaning under the bondage of sin and the law, become free, 3: 26—29. Those who were children in a state of minority and pupilage, are advanced to the dignity of sons and heirs of God, and receive the seal of their adoption as such in the presence of the Spirit of God in their hearts, 4: 1—7.

In view of this superiority of the Christian dispensation to the Jewish, Paul then remonstrates with the Galatians on their folly and ingratitude in turning back to the beggarly elements of the latter, 4: 8

—11. He adds his most earnest entreaty that they would return and trust again with him in Christ; he strengthens this appeal by a touching allusion to their former affection for him, and distinctly apprises them that in becoming alienated from him they had been made the dupes of artful men, whose pretended zeal for the law originated in the most interested and unworthy motives, 4: 12—20.

This second part of the discussion he closes, by employing the history of Abraham and his family as an allegory or illustration of the two systems which he has been considering. The points of comparison which are suggested here, are such as these. Judaism or the legal system, of which Ishmael who was of servile origin, may be considered as a type, imposes a spiritual bondage on those who adhere to it; whereas Christianity which is a free dispensation and hence fitly represented by Isaac, the son of a free woman, liberates men from their bondage and makes them the children of God. Again, as Ishmael was born in a mere natural way, so the Jews are a mere natural seed; but Christians, who obtain justification in conformity with the promise made to Abraham, are the true promised seed, even as Isaac was. Further, as of old Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the child of promise, so it is not to be accounted strange that under the gospel the natural seed, that is, the Jews, should persecute the spiritual seed, that is, Christians. And, finally, as Isaac was acknowledged as the true heir but Ishmael was set aside, so must it be as to the difference which exists between Jews and believers; the former, or in other words, those who depend on their own merit for obtaining the favor of God, will be rejected, while those who seek it by faith, shall realize the blessing, 4: 21—31. By means of this illustration, which was intended not so much to convince the understanding as to impress the memory, the apostle skillfully recapitulates the prominent doctrinal ideas of the epistle, and at the same time leaves them so associated in the minds of the Galatians with a familiar and striking portion of sacred history, that they could never have been easily forgotten.

The practical part of the epistle then follows. The apostle here exhorts the Galatians to maintain their liberty in Christ, because the surrender of it would deprive them of all benefit from the gospel and render them debtors to keep the whole law in order to be saved, 5: 1—6. He reminds them of the sad contrast between their present state and the commencement of their Christian career, and desires that they might be restored to the condition which they had left, even though the formal excision of those who had misled them, might be necessary for this purpose, 5: 7—12. He then turns to warn them against an abuse of their Christian liberty, enjoins upon them an ob-

servance of the law as a rule of duty, the essence of which is love, and whose requirement in this respect they would be enabled to fulfil by following the dictates of the Spirit, 5: 18—18. To enable them to judge whether they are actuated by the Spirit or an opposite principle, he enumerates, first, some of the works of the flesh, and then, the characteristic fruits of the Spirit, 5: 19—26.

He adds, in the last chapter, several general directions, such as relate, for example, to the spirit with which Christians should admonish those who fall into sin, the patience which they should exhibit towards each others' faults, the duty of providing for the wants of Christian teachers, and in short, performing unweariedly every good work with the assurance that in due time they should have their reward, 6: 1—10. He warns them once more against the sinister designs of those who were so earnest for circumcision, holds up to their view again the cross of Christ as that alone in which men should glory, and closes with a prayer for them as those whom he would still regard as brethren, 6: 11—18.

ARTICLE VI.

RECENT WORKS IN METAPHYSICAL SCIENCE.

By Noah Porter, Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics, Yale College.

An Historical and Critical View of the Speculative Philosophy of Europe in the nineteenth century. By J. D. Morell, A. M. In 2 vols. 2nd edition, revised and enlarged. London: John Johnstone 26 Paternoster Row, and 15 Princes Street, Edinburgh. 1847.

The same Work. New York and Pittsburg: Robert Carter. 1847.

The Works of Thomas Reid, D. D. Now fully collected with selections from his unpublished Letters. Preface, notes and supplementary dissertations by Sir William Hamilton, Bart. Advocate, etc. Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh. Text collated and revised; useful distinctions inserted; leading words and propositions marked out; allusions indicated; quotations filled up. Prefixed, Stewart's account of the Life and Writings of Reid; with Notes by the editor. Copious indices subjoined. 1 volume (incomplete), pp. 914. Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart and Co. London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans. 1846.